



**Testimony  
Betsy Gara  
Executive Director  
Connecticut Council of Small Towns  
Before the Energy & Technology Committee  
March 3, 2022**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) **supports the intent of SB-176, AN ACT CONCERNING SHARED CLEAN ENERGY FACILITIES**, which seeks to expand and facilitate the use of renewable energy in our communities, including increasing the energy cap on shared clean energy facilities.

In addition to increasing the cap on shared clean energy facilities, COST supports efforts to increase the cap on virtual net metering to ensure that municipalities may continue to participate in projects that will promote the use of renewable energy and reduce a town's energy costs.

Virtual Net Metering has been a win-win for municipalities because it allows towns to save thousands of dollars each year in energy costs while promoting the use of clean, renewable energy. The problem is, however, that the \$20 million cap severely limits the number of towns that are eligible to participate in Virtual Net Metering projects. The current cap unfairly penalizes municipalities that would like to take advantage of the program. Eliminating or significantly increasing the cap would provide towns with a valuable mechanism for reducing costs and controlling property tax levels.

In addition, we would like to address issues referenced in testimony submitted by Lodestar that indicate that COST supports last year's bill, SB-993. Although we are happy to continue the conversation, we do not support SB-993, as drafted.

The language in SB-993 does not address concerns regarding a loophole in the existing law that prevents municipalities from collecting taxes on certain industrial-size solar projects inasmuch as its provisions only apply to projects constructed after a certain date. Moreover, some of our members strongly believe that municipalities should be able to negotiate any fixed annual assessment for themselves, considering things like location and developable opportunity for identified parcel.

Again, we are happy to continue discussing a path forward for addressing these issues.